Note from the McMillan Gifted Department: Welcome Back!! I hope all our students and their families had a safe, restful and relaxing break. It is going to be a great year here at McMillan so I wanted to highlight the many fantastic programs, services and opportunities which are available to your students through the Omaha Public Schools, Gifted and Talented office. Even though this is my twentieth year at McMillan, I still get excited in anticipation of getting the new school year off the ground and rolling. Believe it or not, in a few short weeks, summer will have become just a fleeting memory. So my question to each of your students is this; how will they get involved this year? Being involved in just one extracurricular activity has been proven to positively affect a student’s entire middle school experience. Involvement builds lasting friendships, fosters a sense of belonging and creates cherished memories which students carry with them to high school and beyond. There is something for everyone from Book Blasters to Academic Pentathlon, African American History Challenge to Quiz Bowl, Science Olympiad to chess club and so many, many more opportunities. It is my sincere desire for all of my students to be involved, healthy and happy. Therefore, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you and your students back to another exciting year at McMillan Magnet Center.

Academic Pentathlon and Honors Special Projects: Congratulations to last year’s 7th and 8th grade Academic Pentathlon teams. Their diligence and hard work earned them 3rd place at Nationals in Minneapolis. Members of the team were honored by Superintendent, Mr. Evans at the June 20th School Board meeting. McMillan has earned the opportunity to represent Omaha Public Schools for the past six years in a row and we hope to do it again. This year Nationals will be held here in Omaha!! This not only gives us the home court advantage but also allows family and friends to cheer us on like never before.

All students enrolled in Honors Special Projects this semester will be working to study this year’s topic, which will focus on the continent of Africa. Students will investigate Africa through the five interconnected lenses of Fine Arts, Literature, Science, Mathematics and Social Sciences. As in the past years we will be testing student knowledge in December with the goal to field two, nine student teams to compete in the state competition scheduled for 2nd semester and then hopefully Nationals in May.

Spelling and Geography Bees: These two competitions take place in December and January and are open to all McMillan students in grades six through eight. Teachers hold individual competitions as part of their Language Arts or Social Studies classes and advance the names of qualifying students to
the all school Bee. The winner of the school completion advances to the district level in the case of the Spelling Bee and the State level for the Geography Bee.

**Quiz Bowl:** Does your student have a natural gift for retaining obscure bits of trivia? Do they have a naturally competitive spirit? Well then, Quiz Bowl may be for them. This completion club is open to all McMillan students in grades six through eight. Teams of two to four students get the opportunity to pit their command of trivia against students from other area schools. Competitions are almost all on Saturday mornings throughout the school year. Quiz Bowl practices after school on Wednesdays from 3:15 until 4:30, in room 173. All are welcome!

**African American History Challenge:** This club sponsored by the 100 Black Men of Omaha is very similar to Quiz Bowl but focuses on the background, journey, struggles, and legacy of the African American experience in our country. This completion club is open to all McMillan students in grades six through eight. Practices begin in October and are one night a week after school to be determined. Additionally, there are four to five Saturday review sessions, hosted by the district at Monroe middle school, dates to be announced. The competition is at North High in February during African American History Month.

**Vex Robotics:** VEX Robotics is a competitive challenge that requires a team of students to build, program, and drive their robots to score points. The purpose for this club is to develop skills in building and programming robots as well as learning how to work with others to reach a common goal and do so in a competitive and fun setting. This club is open to all students, 6-8th grade, with any level of experience. We meet every Wednesday and Thursday from 3:15 to 5:00pm. The Robotics season goes from the start of September through the end of March. Last year, two of our teams made it to the regional level competition that was held at North High School. If you have more questions about this year's competition, here is a website that describes the game in detail: [https://www.vexrobotics.com/vexedr/competition/vrc-current-game](https://www.vexrobotics.com/vexedr/competition/vrc-current-game). Go VEX!

**Scholars:** Scholars is a two-year District program for seventh and eighth grade students to help support high ability students in their college ambitions. The ten, seventh grade students from last year advance to eighth grade scholars and ten new seventh grade students will be selected for the current year. These twenty students will meet once a month during Pride homeroom. They will receive support from the Gallup Corporation in identifying leadership skills, will take the ACT, and receive guidance on their academic successes and struggles throughout the year.

**Think Tank:** A competition, which develops skills in problem solving, interpreting current issues, writing, speaking and art. These teams of students will research current problems, devise a solution for the problem and then attempt to sell their solution to a team of judges. Students will meet during the day or after school. Competition is at UNO in mid-Decem
Science Olympiad: This club is open to all students, 6-8th grade. Students compete in categories ranging from making a bridge, planes and cars, to taking tests in anatomy, chemistry, physics, and others. There is a district and state competition. McMillan placed 3rd in the competition last year, and has placed in the top five in eight of the last nine years!!

Science Fair: This club is open to all students, 6-8th grade. It's a science and engineering fair where students come up with and test an idea, then present it to a panel of judges. Last year, McMillan placed eight students in the top three of their categories and had one student place in the top six of the overall competition, qualifying him for the Nebraska State Competition.

Science bowl: This club is teacher selected. Students must have a solid base in math and science. There are only five to a team. Last year, McMillan had two teams make the final 16 teams in state with each one winning at least one match in the final bracket.

Poetry Slam: This is one of the several Friday clubs students can choose to participate in. It is open to 7th and 8th graders first semester and to all students, including 6th graders, for 2nd semester. Students compose poems on different topics and then recite their work to the group. Two students are chosen each semester to represent McMillan at the District, Poetry Slam.

National Junior Honor Society: This group of students, selected last spring, will participate in different campaigns designed to make not only our school but also the greater community a better place to live. Last year, students participated in the Susan G. Komen for the Cure drive during Breast Cancer awareness month, College Colors Day activities and the Leukemia/Lymphoma Societies Pennies for Patients campaign. This academic club meets weekly during Pride Homeroom.

The selection process for 7th graders to be inducted into the National Junior Honor Society will be slightly different this year. Selection will get underway at the beginning of second semester instead in April/May. This will allow current eighth grade members to help guide the new inductees for next school year and give the opportunity to eighth grade students who were not selected as seventh grades but have distinguished themselves during 1st semester to be inducted and participate in activities 2nd semester. All currently enrolled 7th and 8th grade students with a grade point of 3.5 are eligible.

Important Dates

Fall Poetry Slam November 29, 2017
Think Tank December 12, 2017
Spelling Bee February 8, 2018
Book Blasters February 28, 2018
Quiz Bowl Championships March 27, 2018
Pentathlon Super Quiz April 12, 2018
Spring Poetry Slam April 24, 2018